

CSCE NEWS RELEASE

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe

234 Ford House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-6460
Sen. Alfonse D'Amato, Chairman
Rep. Christopher Smith, Co-Chairman

Contact: Chadwick R. Gore
1-202-225-1901
e-mail: CGORE@HR.HOUSE.GOV

Commission Voices Grave Concern Over Pattern of Abduction of Journalists in Chechnya: Calls For Release of Abductees

**For Immediate Release
March 5, 1997**

**Contact: Chadwick R. Gore
(202) 225-1901**

Washington, DC—The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the Helsinki Commission, today urged Chechen authorities to use every appropriate means to secure the release of four Russian journalists kidnapped in Chechnya on March 4, and for renewed efforts to locate other victims of kidnapping in Chechnya. According to the Russian news agency ITAR-TASS, unidentified gunmen seized Nikolai Zagnoiko, an ITAR-TASS staff writer; Yuri Arkhipov and Nikolai Mamolashvili, Radio Rossiya reporters and Lev Zeltsin, a satellite communications technician based in Grozny.

"I am greatly concerned over the apparent pattern of media representatives being abducted in Chechnya, indeed the entire wave of kidnappings that has plagued Chechnya. Freedom of the Press and Freedom of Movement are standards that anyone aspiring to join the international community must recognize and protect," said Commission Chairman Senator Alfonse D'Amato (R-C-NY). "I urge Chechen authorities to take appropriate steps to see that these journalists, as well as other persons who have been abducted, are located and released, and also to establish viable rule of law in Chechnya."

continued on page 2 of 2

The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe by law monitors and encourages progress in implementing the provisions of the Helsinki Accords. The Commission, created in 1976, is made up of nine Senators, nine Representatives and one official each from the Departments of State, Commerce and Defense. For more information about the Commission, please call (202) 225-1901.

CSCE NEWS RELEASE

page 2 of 2

"I realize that the recent conflict in Chechnya has created a pattern of lawlessness in that tortured land," said Commission Co-Chairman Christopher H. Smith (R-NJ). "However, it is incumbent upon President Maskhadov and his government to ensure that Chechnya's increased autonomy does not turn into a bacchanalia of criminality and violence."

This most recent kidnapping is the latest of a spate of abductions, disappearances—and even killings—of journalists that have accompanied the breakdown of law and order in Chechnya since the outbreak of the secessionist conflict in 1994. In some cases, culpability for the murder of journalists has been charged to the Russian military. However, with the removal of the Russian military from Chechnya, the wave of kidnappings has continued. On February 23, an Italian journalist for *Il Giorno* was kidnapped in Grozny, soon after the high-profile release of two Russian television journalists. According to the Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ) in New York, nine journalists are missing in Chechnya, four of whom are presumed dead. An American freelance journalist, Andrew Shumack, disappeared from Grozny in July, 1995.

Besides journalists, several other non-journalists, primarily citizens of the former Soviet Union, have also been kidnapped and held for ransom. According to press reports, Chechen authorities confirm that more than 350 persons have been taken hostage since November, 1994.